



House Select Committee on Homeland Security **Democrats**

JIM TURNER, Ranking Member

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US VISIT NOT YET AN EFFECTIVE COUNTERTERRORISM TOOL

“The events of September 11 made clear that we need an effective system to screen foreign nationals who are entering the United States. The US VISIT system has potential, but much more needs to be done to make it an effective counterterrorism tool,” said Congressman Jim Turner, Ranking Member of the House Select Committee on Homeland Security.

Turner made his comments regarding US VISIT, a system to monitor the entry and exit of people to and from the United States at air, sea and land ports of entry, which the Department of Homeland Security launched today.

Turner cited significant shortcomings including:

- Foreign nationals entering the country are not being screened against a comprehensive, integrated terrorist watchlist;
- Under current plans, less than 10% of foreign nationals entering the United States will be tracked under US VISIT;
- Individuals from the 27 countries participating in the Visa Waiver Program are exempt from US VISIT, and few of these countries will be able to meet the October 2004 mandate for machine readable biometric passports;
- US VISIT only collects entry data at 14 of 42 seaports—and exit data is only collected at one seaport for one cruise line;
- US VISIT is not operational at any U.S. land ports of entry.

The Administration is planning to put US VISIT into effect at the 50 busiest land border crossings by the end of this year. Land border crossings handle 80% of all U.S. entry inspections and are responsible for monitoring the 89% of U.S. trade from Canada and Mexico that enters the country on rail or truck each year.

“I am deeply concerned that the Administration has not developed US VISIT in a way that ensures safe borders without hindering legitimate travel and trade.”

“I intend to watch US VISIT closely, to ensure it is as comprehensive and effective as it can be in fighting the war on terror. The Homeland Security Committee should also hold hearings on US VISIT to make sure this country has a border security system that works,” said Turner.

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